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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an overview of the Academic Enrichment for Gifted in Summer (AEGIS) programs, an in-depth view of one AEGIS program, and a description of the creation and production of a historic play. In 1984, Arkansas sponsored its first 5 summer AEGIS programs, involving 275 students. In 1988, programs served 1,300 students. Day-programs offered outdoor biology and ecology courses, drama classes, and mathematical modeling studies. Residential programs offered experiential learning in art, science, languages, outdoor studies, theater, and environmental education. Arkansas' 1986 Sesquicentennial celebration sparked an AEGIS history program that used an interdisciplinary approach and integrated art, literature, humanities, drama, and music into historical studies. Forty high school students selected for the program were divided into four groups, each of which focused on a particular period of Arkansas history. Students listened to lectures, heard poetry, took field trips, wrote creative fiction, and worked collectively to produce a play incorporating what they had learned during the program. The students used brainstorming sessions, improvisational exercises, and videotape to create the final production. Within 2 weeks, the talented and gifted students had written and produced a play, which was presented on the final night of the summer program. (TES)

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GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS: THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The importance of challenging our gifted and talented youth cannot be underestimated. The future of our nations' leadership is at stake. This paper will address the following: 1. An overview of Arkansas AEGIS (Academic Enrichment for Gifted in Summer) Program, 2. An indepth view of one of the AEGIS Programs, 3. An elaboration on the process of creating and performing a historic play.

AN OVERVIEW OF AEGIS

In 1984 Arkansas sponsored its first summer AEGIS Gifted and Talented Programs. The initial endeavor supported five programs and worked with approximately 275 students. By the summer of 1988, AEGIS had grown to thirty-seven programs and served approximately 1300 students. The following is a listing and description of the 1988 summer programs.

AEGIS PROGRAMS, 1988
DAY PROGRAMS

1. SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR CREATIVE AND DRAMATIC ARTS
   This program is designed for students who have demonstrated a high degree of interest in the creative arts. It focuses on activities that will allow students to extend their creative thinking and production in the areas of creative writing, theater arts, videography, and visual arts.

2. ECOLOGY AND FIELD BIOLOGY
   Students spend several days and nights in the field collecting physical, chemical and biological data on ecosystem structure. At Henderson State University, computer programs, A-V lectures and lab activities will shape the field data into a new understanding of the environment.

3. CRE-8
   CRE-8 is designed to expose and train students within the following areas of performing arts: drama, costumes, dance, stage

design, make-up, scenic arts, music (vocal and instrumental), and theater management.

4. PROJECT PINE FOREST (PEOPLE, INDUSTRY, NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTAL ECOLOGY FINDING OUR ROOTS, EVER SEEKING TOMORROW)

Students encounter an in-depth study of the development of a town from a pioneer mill town to the "Forestry Capital of the World".

5. HEALTH SCIENCE SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

This program is designed for students who envision themselves working in the health care profession. Students will be exposed to and have hands on experience with the following instruments: Electrocardiograph, Spectrophotometer, Centrifuge, Electric treadmill, Water bath, Refractometer, Skyndex (electronic body fat calculator), Computerized wellness assessments, Accu-check II blood glucose monitor and HPR-100 computerized strength measurements.

6. MATH KALEIDOSCOPE

Math Kaleidoscope is designed to challenge mathematically gifted students. This challenge will consist of three parts: an emphasis on problem-solving techniques and practice, including original problems developed by the students themselves; exposure to individuals in a number of fields who will demonstrate applications of mathematics in their careers and in the "real world"; and introduction to some topics from discrete mathematics, an area of mathematics that some experts feel will be as important as calculus within a decade.

7. MATHEMATICAL MODELING-THE SOLUTION TO REAL WORLD PROBLEMS

Real world problems, as opposed to "textbook" problems, are seldom encountered in high school textbooks. To make mathematics come alive, topics from various areas of mathematical modeling are presented, including machine scheduling, inventory control, network theory, and linear programming.

8. OASIS

This program provides an opportunity to work in one of five communication media: photography, visual arts, music, creative writing or journalism.

9. BREAKAWAY

This program introduces students to non-traditional approaches of making art through a series of individualized and group projects. Students will be exposed to non-traditional methods of conceptualization.

10. TECHNITRON

This program shows how man creatively shapes technology to meet his needs and uses technology as an expression of art.

11. ECOLOGICAL STUDIES OR AQUATIC HABITATS IN THE OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Students interested in pursuing an exciting adventure into the biological and chemical realm of aquatic habitats in the Ouachita National Forest assemble at the UAM Science Center. Audiovisuals, computer-assisted modules, and innovative lectures by highly, qualified faculty involve students in the dynamics of plant and animal communities in the pond, lake and stream ecosystems.

12. MASH (MEDICAL APPLICATION OF SCIENCE FOR HEALTH)

The students have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of how the basic sciences relate to medical diagnosis and treatment. This is accomplished through labs and lectures. Professionals participating in this program include; Nurses, Medical Technologists, Physicians, Radiologic Technologists, Respiratory Therapists, Physical Therapists and Dietitians.

13. I SAVE (Independent Science and Views of Environment)

This program challenges students to explore environmental concerns. It is conducted at a 360 acre lake/wooded area in scenic Washington County.

14. LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Laureate International Studies (LIS) is a program for students who envision themselves as future leaders. Its unique design allows students to explore and discuss global issues with national, state and local individuals involved in international affairs, study a foreign language, and conduct research with the latest in technology.

15. SUMMER SCIENCE INSTITUTES

This program offers a comprehensive curriculum in science and mathematics. Students with the required prerequisites may apply to one of five institutes: two Biology Institutes, the Chemistry Institute, the Field Science Institute and the Microcomputer, Measurements and Mathematics Institute. An academic year outreach program puts supplies and equipment into the science classrooms of high schools that participate.

16. KALEIDOSCOPE, A CREATIVE EXPERIENCE

This program offer students an exciting opportunity for creative expression through the performing arts. After a study of the arts and how they interrelate, the students create and produce their own final program.

RESIDENTIAL

17. MANY PATHS TO THE MOUNTAIN

In this AEGIS program, each student explores physical learning by classes in archeology, ceramics, and wellness. In order to look at the methods of learning established by academic

disciplines, they will choose two of four classes: literature, music, intellectual history, and psychology/sociology.

18. ART ENCOUNTER

"Art Encounter" is for students who are in art, music, dance, or theatre. Activities are designed to foster the spontaneous, creative arts process; develop appreciation of an sensitivity to art, music, dance, and theatre; and demonstrate the impact of the arts in society. Students learn how to create art or theater works or compose music or dance.

19. MOTIVATIONAL SCIENCE - A MICROBIOLOGICAL/CHEMISTRY PARADIGM

Students engage in a science program focusing on aspects of biology and chemistry atypical of their normal K-12 exposure. Specifically, their studies concentrate on micro-biological and chemical concepts and techniques.

20. FUTURISTICS - THE YEAR 2000

"The world's greatest need is an appetite for the future." (C.P. Snow) By studying the future, people can better anticipate what lies ahead. Students consider many issues which are of global concern, learn about techniques used by futurists and take a future trip as a planning tool.

21. UPLAND AND LOWLAND FIELD TECHNIQUES

Students interested in pursuing an exciting adventure in science study the ecologies of uplands and lowlands in west and southwest Arkansas. Collecting techniques for each area be stressed. Air and water quality are sampled, and flora and fauna of each area are studied.

22. PROJECT GO (GEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION)

Project GO (Geological Orientation) is a "hands on" laboratory and field trip covering 2,000 miles throughout Arkansas. Physical and Historical Geology is presented using Arkansas examples. Students, accompanied by professional staff and geologists from the Arkansas Geological Commission, experience mines, caves, float trips, actual field work, and a variety of industrial plants.

23. WHEN IN ROME DO AS THE ROMANS DID: ROME BROUGHT TO LIFE

Students experience Latin as a spoken language through simple conversation and song, practice spoken Latin and learn common Latin phrases. The daily life and customs of Rome are explored through photography, pottery, sculpture, and drama.

24. PROJECT LAND (LOVE ARKANSAS' NATURAL DIVISIONS)

Join forces with PROJECT LAND for three weeks of traveling and camping in Arkansas. See Arkansas' caves, geologic deposits, trees, fish, birds, deer and its natural secluded areas. Arkansas' natural resources appear at every bend as you float its rivers. The many uses of resources are seen through tours of industries.

25. ARKANSAS-AN ABUNDANCE OF ENERGY RESOURCES

Where will the energy come from to heat and light our homes in the future? Arkansas possesses an abundance of resources that point to a bright future and and energy-secure Arkansas. These questions and their answers come alive with field trip experiences to Nuclear 1, and Greer's Ferry.

26. RIGHT SIDE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE ARTS

This program is designed to give qualified high school students an understanding of arts technology, an understanding of the hemispherical workings of the brain, and an opportunity to produce genuinely creative performances and works of art through the marriage of technology and the workings of the right side of the brain.

27. THE CHALLENGE OF TECHNOLOGY: THE COMMUNICATIONS REVOLUTION

This program provides an exciting and challenging exposure to the world of media and communications. Students develop skills in television production, journalism, word processing and interpersonal relations while working as members of a team whose goal is to plan, write, videotape and edit a thirty-minute television documentary.

28. MEADOWCREEK WEEKS

Meadowcreek Weeks is a program of environmental education at the Meadowcreek Project, an environmental education center near Fox. Aimed at students interested in the environment and/or agriculture, it is broadly interdisciplinary. The theories and methods of the natural and social sciences, examination of human values, and creative technology and architecture are applied to problems of the environment and agriculture.

29. FROM THE FRONTIER TO THE FREEWAY: 152 YEARS OF ARKANSAS CULTURE, PEOPLE, AND PLACES

Because of the renewed statewide interest in Arkansas history brought about by the sesquicentennial celebration, this is a unique opportunity for students to participate in a variety of activities including lectures, discussions, field trips, and a historic play which will provide 152 years of cultural, musical, dramatic, literary, and linguistic backgrounds to Arkansas' history. The participants meet an Arkansas novelist, dramatist, poet, archivist, writers, musicians, environmentalists; they visit the State Capitol and other historic sites including the Caddo Indian Museum and Old Washington State Park; they play old and modern musical instruments; they write and produce a historical play; and they participate in a study of Arkansas expressions and sayings with computer analysis and interpretation.

30. PROJECT C.A.V.E.S. (CREATIVE ADVENTURES AND VALUABLE EXPERIENCES THROUGH SPELUNKING)

Students participate in a minimum of five field trips and attend special classes in cave biology, acquiring spelunking skills, appreciating the aesthetic qualities of caves, and learning the importance of leadership and interdependence through teamwork.

31. SUMMER B.R.E.A.K. (BUFFALO RIVER EDUCATIONAL ADVENTURES FOR KIDS)

The goal of this program is to emphasize how man relates and reacts with nature and his environment. Hydrology, geology, biology, botany, and environmental studies as they relate to the Buffalo River will be emphasized.

32. PROJECT WET 'n' WILD

Students are involved in field classes with "hands-on" experiences in: learning to use scientific tools, plant ecology, aquatic studies, bird and mammal behaviors, subterranean exploration, and geological examinations.

33. DISCOVERING PLUM BAYOU AND OTHER NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES

Students work for one week side-by-side with professional archeologists at the Toltec Mound Excavation Site, North Little Rock, as members of the Arkansas Archeological Society. They return to Southern Arkansas University where they continue their study of American Indians and of communication methods.

34. TECHNOLOGY AS AN APPLIED SCIENCE

Students are introduced to electronics, robotics, aviation, and computer aided technologies. The role that technology plays in our society and how we fit into the total world-wide application of technology are stressed.

35. FULBRIGHT SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Fulbright School of Public Affairs provides students with a unique opportunity to Examine current social, economic and political concerns, issues and attitudes in America and the world today and Explore the meaning of civic responsibility in a democratic society, to Consider the influence of cultural values and traditions on politics and public policies and the role of today's media in shaping public opinion.

36. INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS: A THEATRE WORKSHOP

The theme of this interdisciplinary program is "Princess and the Performance". Participants explore the various elements and how they are integrated in the process of creating a theatrical production. The areas of writing, acting, music, dance,lighting, state management and set and costume design are investigated from a technological as well as an artistic perspective, culminating in a production, which is the work of the students.

37. THE STROLLING PLAYERS

"We're gettin' our act together, and we're takin' it on the road." That describes "The Strolling Players", a program which provides experience in the performing arts. Students meet in Walnut Ridge to spend five days participating in rehearsals and various learning experiences in preparation for stage production of the play "The Strolling Players". The troupe then departs for eight days of travel, performing at and camping in eight state parks in Arkansas. The purpose of "The Strolling Players" is to offer peer interaction and a performing arts experience emphasizing the early touring theatre in Arkansas.

(More information on each of these programs may be obtained by writing to the authors of the paper or to the Gifted and Talented Program, Department of Education, Little Rock, AR.)

IN DEPTH VIEWS

Because of the renewed awareness, interest, and curricular emphasis on Arkansas history brought about by the Arkansas Sesquicentennial celebration in 1986, this program provided a unique opportunity for 9th through 12th grade students to participate in a variety of activities including lectures, discussions, field trips, and a historic play which provided 152 years of cultural, musical, dramatic, literary, and linguistic backgrounds to Arkansas' history. The participants met in Arkansas novelist, dramatist, poet, archivist, writers, musicians, environmentalists; they visited the State Capitol and other historic sites including the Caddo Indian Museum and old Washington State Park; they played old and modern musical instruments; they wrote and produced a historical play; and they participated in a study of Arkansas expressions and sayings with computer analysis and interpretation.

Now in its third year, the program is designed to appeal to 9th through 12th grade students who are interested in an interdisciplinary approach whose purpose is to integrate the humanities, social sciences, and future economic development. Furthermore, because of the National Endowment for the Humanities' emphasis on the need to expose students to the humanities (art, literature, drama, music, history), this program, capitalizing on the recent historic occasion, helps develop a better, stronger and more meaningful acuity to and an understanding of the humanities through the familiar and the native.

The program is geared for gifted and talented students who have an interest in Arkansas history on the one hand, and in the humanities on the other. Specifically, the history of Arkansas art, music, literature (fiction, poetry, drama), history, language, sociology, and natural resources (and uses thereof) were very carefully discussed. Each instructor was asked to do the following: (1) deliver a semi-formal lecture to the whole group, and (2) based on the lecture, initiate and encourage informal discussion with small group work on a given issue or

problem. The students were encouraged to use higher level thinking skills to resolve a given hypothetical problem or to analyze a given issue. Where applicable, the instructor conducted a tour as an illustration to his/her lecture.

The thrust of this particular three-week residential program, however, lay in this attempt to bridge the past with the present. In order to fully integrate all of the academic areas and their related activities, the students were required to write and produce a historical play based on various aspects of Arkansas history. The plot material was derived from various lectures, individual readings, their own journals, original journals written by various Arkansas personalities, and their own observations and interactions within their individual groups.

STUDENT SELECTION AND GROUPING

Every effort was made to recruit students representing a cross-sectional, socio-economic level as well as an equal ratio of male to female students. The criteria for the selection process included the following: grades, standardized test scores, involvement in extra-curricular activities (such as honor societies, student government, sports, plays, music programs and clubs), and teacher recommendations (regarding character, creativity, initiative, leadership, ability and commitment to tasks).

The forty (40) students selected for the program were divided into four groups (with a cross-sectional grade level and geographical representation as well as an equal male-to-female ratio) representing different eras of Arkansas history. Each group of students was assigned reading and writing tasks as well as research and dramatic activities which were derived from specific and significant historical eras.

These groups were as follows:

Group I.	Indians and Early Settlers, through Statehood, 1700-1850.
Group II.	Civil War and After, 1860-1900.
Group III.	Early 20th Century through Post World War I, 1900-1935.
Group IV.	Post Depression through Modern Times, 1936-Present.

Dividing the students into four groups of ten each lent itself to an excellent learning environment. This was particularly helpful in the small group interactions (brain-storming, discussion, and problem solving) sessions.

Because we wanted the students to learn and exercise leadership, group dynamics and the process of selecting group spokespersons were left up to the students. Every student was encouraged to participate in all aspects of the individual group work and the larger collective group work.

THE USE OF SUBJECT AREAS IN THE DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS

When the program was first begun during the summer of 1986, the students were asked to produce skits based on their two week experience. The following year the students, under the direction of a drama coach, produced a one hour comedy based on a real historical incident derived from the Arkansas frontier days. Because of the success of these two previous performances, I decided that for the third year group's dramatic activity the students would write and produce their own play. Hence, very early in the session the students were made aware that each of their groups had to write a script for a complete act whose general theme would deal with some aspect of Arkansas history.

In order to prepare the students for both the writing skills (namely the ability to write creatively, to create plots, to develop the cognitive backgrounds on which the plot would depend, the students had to listen to lectures, to work in groups, and to write creative and original essays.

It should be stressed at this point that each student was required to participate in the script writing. Each student was also required to be involved in some aspect of the production. The various lectures, activities and field trips were organized in chronological fashion so as to provide the students with a better sense of historicity. Furthermore, a balance between classroom lectures and other activities was maintained. these lectures and other educational activities were provided during the morning and afternoon hours, while a two hour later evening segment was designated for script writing and other dramatic preparations. An archaeologist lectured on Arkansas' Indian roots, and historian presented an overview of Arkansas history beginning with territorial times and going through modern times, two sociologists lectured on the various social structures and social support systems with special comparison of rural and urban societies, and art historian lectured on Arkansas' architectural heritage, and Arkansas novelist discussed her works, a historian lectured on the value of recording and interpreting of history, a poet lectured on creativity, two dramatists worked with plot and setting, a linguist presented a lecture on Arkansas' linguistic heritage, a humorist lectured on and read examples of American humor, and a group of musicians gave a historical background to Arkansas' musical heritage.

What follows is a list of specific objectives which were to be accomplished within the two week period:

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Upon the completion of lectures and discussions regarding Arkansas history (including Indian culture, social structures - past and present - architectural history, musical history, the study of the Arkansas Delta as it is portrayed in the works of Faulkner and Twain) and after instruction in methods and approaches to writing history, the students will write a fictional diary, short story, or other form of creative writing which will exhibit knowledge of the historical topics, or will compose a song or work of

art which would portray the study of Arkansas history in some form.

2. The students, during a discussion of an autobiographical novel, Big Doc's Girl, will be able to answer pertinent oral questions and participate in the discussions.
3. The students, at the conclusion of a study of Arkansas' natural resources, will participate in a chemical analysis of the water at Lake DeGray and in a discussion involving the impact of pollution on the environment, as well as be able to project into the future (either in written or oral form) to determine how the delicate balance in the Arkansas environment can be maintained.
4. At the conclusion of the study of migratory routes through Arkansas and their impact on Arkansas dialects, the students will conduct a language survey in Clark and Hempstead counties.
5. The students, upon the conclusion of the instruction in the use of the computer in the area of the analysis of data, will compile their own linguistic data by feeding the results of the surveys into the computer.
6. The students, upon hearing a published Arkansas poet lecture on and read poetry, will attempt to write their own poems. Dr. Johnny Wink will make himself available for individual students who would like to have some of their poems critiqued.
7. At the conclusion of field trips and tours to Little Rock and other historical sites, the students will be able to evaluate and synthesize the importance of future economic growth in the area of Arkansas' future agricultural, industrial, mineral, and hydrological capabilities.
8. Upon instruction in the area of hunger and its impact on the lives of Arkansans, the students will better understand the causes and impact which hunger has on the lives of modern-day Arkansans.
9. Upon learning dramatic techniques, such as writing a play, acting, producing, costume making, stage managing, etc., the students will "create" and produce their own play which will be the result of synthesizing factual historical, cultural, and other information gained from lectures and field trips.

While the lectures and activities were done in tandem and in a chronological manner, the dramatic activities were reserved for the evenings. Divided into their era groups, the students met for two hours for the purpose of developing the plot and characterization. Each group was instructed to write and act for a historical play covering any aspect of Arkansas history; they were given leeway regarding locale and theme. The program director and the drama director/coach worked with the individual groups to fine tune the plots and to provide instruction in the areas of characterization, dialogue, theme and other literary and technical aspects.

Within two weeks the students wrote a four act play which was produced, with much success, on the final night of the program. I am very convinced that high school students are very creative, are very flexible, are eager to learn, and are very capable of dramatizing real or fictional events. Perhaps the most significant thing about this production was the fact that each student was involved in a particular aspect of the production, whether it was script writing, acting, costume and set design, or sound and technical work. The credit goes to our drama director/coach whose remarks provide the necessary information.

CREATIVE PROCESS

This section will elaborate on the steps used to guide gifted and talented students through the process of creating and performing their own one act plays based on historical research.

First of all, the students were made well aware from the very beginning that they were going to publicly perform for 200 to 300 people four scenes of their own creation. They would research, write, produce and perform their own dramatic work. The students knew that they would be actively involved in the process and the product. Very little resistance was experienced other than some of the more shy students expressing concern about having to perform on stage. Although most students did eventually appear on stage, some of the forty did find an interest in technical production that precluded their being on stage, which resolved the situation nicely. Most of the students took on technical projects as well. Our observation was that most of the gifted and talented students were more that excited to be on stage and a sense of purpose pervaded the whole enterprise.

Second, the forty students were grouped evenly into four research and performance teams. The groupings crossed grade levels from rising sophomores to rising seniors, and represented geographic distribution, and even male-to-female distribution. Principles of small group communication were employed to allow a full sending and receiving of ideas. The important early brainstorming sessions were prefaced by instructors emphasizing the importance of everyone's contributions. The instructors also encouraged and promoted breakthroughs as the ideas came out of the four groups. The whole thrust of the organization was to develop teamwork. Each of the four groups would show scenes in progress to the other three groups a number of times before opening night, which gave a positive sense of progress for everyone.

Students gathered ideas for their scenes from the lectures and activities that made up the summer program. Students were prepared by lecture and discussion regarding dramatic structure and dialogue. As the students generated ideas and the time quickly approached to script out the scenes, theatre workshops were conducted to allow the students to see both sides of the process: from the stage and from the script. Improvisational activities on the performance stage allowed the students to efficiently become acquainted with the area and with acting as

well. In one evening, the students went from observers learning stage terminology to actors improvising ideas that they had already selected as important. This improvisational underpinning was most important.

Improvisation allowed the students to work out their ideas with a feeling of movement, character and setting. Members of each group recorded ideas and dialogue and at the end of each evening the script was revised. This leads to another important element in the process, the use of computer word processing as a tool to enable effective and efficient use of time.

Students would input the current scene into computer files and print the latest edition for actors, technical crews and the drama coach. This process allowed the script to take on an official look and allowed the actors to work from an increasingly more reliable script which gave confidence by identifying sections that were surviving. Also a sense of individual and group pride was given as the students saw their productivity take shape as part of the whole.

Videotaping was also an important part of the process. Students could see for themselves what others were seeing. Dialogue could be retrieved as well as movement and characterization. Videotaping allowed the students to assess how their contributions fit into the larger sense of production. The final production in front of 275 people was recorded. This taping made possible the final construction of scripts. To give a final sense of accomplishment, interested students could provide a blank tape to be returned with the show recorded for their own future reference.

Within two weeks, the students wrote a four act play which was produced, with much success, on the final night of the summer program. The high school students were very creative, very flexible, eager to learn and were very capable of dramatizing real or fictional events. Perhaps the most significant thing about this production was the fact that each student was involved in a particular aspect of the production, whether it was script writing, acting, costume and set design, or sound and technical work. Much of the credit goes to our drama director/coach whose encouragement provided the necessary environment for such a creative venture. The overall support from the State of Arkansas, the State Department of Education, Office of Special Education, Ouachita Baptist University, and the program director allowed the gifts and talents of the summer students to emerge: That is what gifted and talented education can do.